GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:844
ANSWERED ON:21.11.2016
Closure of Schools
Khan Shri Md. Badariddoza

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of Government schools have been shut down in the country recently despite a good number of children in them and if so, the details thereof, State-wise;
(b) the reasons for the closure of such schools during the last three years and the Government''s reaction thereto;
(c) whether it is also a fact that student enrolment increased in private schools as against decline in enrolment in Government schools during the last three years; and
(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereon?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
(SHRI UPENDRA KUSHWAHA)

(a) & (b): The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 which came into force from 1st April, 2010 provides children's access to elementary schools within the defined area or limits of neighbourhood. In pursuance to Section 6 of the RTE Act, all States have notified area or limits of their neighbourhood norms and schools are sanctioned to them accordingly. Further, the RTE Act, 2009 also mandates under Section 8 that the appropriate government shall provide free and compulsory elementary education to every child and will ensure availability of a neighbourhood schools.
The opening and closing of schools are within the purview of State Governments and UT Administrations. Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) does not capture information on the number of closed down elementary schools.
Some States and UTs are undertaking an exercise to positively consolidate schools with a view to strengthen elementary education and for optimum utilization of resources. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has emphasized that the States and UTs need to take adequate safeguards to ensure that neighbourhood access of any child is not affected by this exercise.
(c) & (d): As per UDISE, the enrolment in private schools at elementary level has shown an increase of 8.47% from 2012-13 to 2014-15. In government schools the enrolment of children at elementary level has decreased by 1.02% from 2012-13 to 2014-15.
The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) provides assistance to State Governments and UTs to ensure quality elementary education for all children.
Universal enrolment is the first goal of SSA, and hence all efforts are being made to bring all children in schools. SSA has provided 2.04 lakh primary and 1.59 lakh upper primary schools for ensuring universal provisioning of schooling facilities. Preference for opening of school is given to tribal areas, and areas with high concentration of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and minority population. In addition, 3609 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, which are residential schools for girls at upper primary level, have also been sanctioned to the States for improving access to marginalised girls particularly out of school, either drop out or never enrolled. The number of total children enrolled at elementary level has increased from 15.1 crores in 1998-99 to 19.7 crore at present.
Under SSA, provisions have also been made for residential schools/hostels and transportation/ escort facility for children living in sparsely populated areas, children living in areas where schools cannot be opened due to unavailability of land and children in need of care and protection. Special training is also provided to all such children who are school dropouts and long absentees and they are enrolled in "back to school" camps.
Additionally, other strategies adopted under SSA such as strengthening school infrastructure, improving pupil-teacher ratios, providing incentives like free textbooks, uniforms for eligible category of children and mid-day meal in schools have proved to be useful in increasing the enrolment of children in elementary schools.
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